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Decades-old anthrax law quietly cleared the way for COVID-19 drug mandates, doctor says

09/17/2026 // Cassie B. // **700** Views



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- Dr. Meryl Nass says the 2001 anthrax letters built the legal framework used to fast-track COVID-19 drugs and vaccines.

- She points to the 2004 Project BioShield Act and 2005 PREP Act as laws that lowered safety standards while shielding manufacturers from liability.
- Federal biodefense spending grew from under \$1 billion a year to nearly \$20 billion under the Biden administration.
- Nass argues the FBI's case against anthrax suspect Bruce Ivins was never proven, citing findings from the National Academy of Sciences.
- She calls for Congress to end liability shields, saying the current system protects industry profits over public safety.

A physician who has spent extensive time researching biological warfare told a Sept. 11 conference in New York City last week that the 2001 anthrax letters created the legal architecture that allowed the government to deploy unproven drugs and vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Meryl Nass, an internist, presented her findings at the "Turning the Tide: 9/11 25 Years Later" conference, arguing that the dual crises of 9/11 and the subsequent anthrax attacks paved the way for a transformed regulatory landscape. She pointed to the Project BioShield Act of 2004 and the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act of 2005 as laws that lowered standards for emergency medical products while eliminating manufacturer liability.

Anthrax attacks created "fear propaganda" and billions in biodefense spending

Nass said the anthrax letters that killed five people and sickened 17 others in the weeks after the World Trade Center attacks produced what she described as a sustained campaign of public fear.

"As the hysteria from 9/11 wound down, the anthrax letters appeared and we got fear propaganda pumped out 24/7," Nass told the audience.

She noted that federal biodefense spending ballooned after the attacks. Before the anthrax letters, the government spent less than \$1 billion annually on biodefense. That figure rose to \$6 billion to \$7 billion per year in the decade following 2001, and then to \$10 billion to \$11 billion annually in the subsequent decade. During the Biden administration, officials sought nearly \$20 billion per year.

Nass also listed 11 disease threats that major media organizations hyped over the past 25 years, including SARS-1, avian flu, Zika, swine flu, Ebola and monkeypox.

Liability shields allowed unlicensed products to reach the public

Nass traced how Congress changed federal law to make it easier to deploy experimental medical products. The Project BioShield Act established the emergency use authorization framework and provided funding for pandemic and biowarfare countermeasures.

Under that law, an unlicensed drug or vaccine could be used during a national security emergency if officials believed "it was more likely than not that it would be useful," Nass said.

The PREP Act then provided liability protections for manufacturers. Nass said these changes were essential during COVID-19 because they eliminated the legal risks that normally accompany product development.

"The PREP Act legalized the use of liability-free vaccines and drugs that might or might not be licensed," she said.

She also criticized the 21st Century Cures Act of 2016, which removed liability for vaccines recommended during pregnancy. "So if anything happens to the fetus or to the pregnant mother, there is no liability," Nass said.

FBI's case against Bruce Ivins remains unresolved, physician says

Nass challenged the official FBI conclusion that Dr. Bruce Ivins was responsible for the anthrax letters. Ivins died by suicide three days before the FBI announced its intention to seek the death penalty against him.

Nass said the FBI had publicly pursued seven other scientists before settling on Ivins. She noted that the National Academy of Sciences later found that scientific evidence could not establish the origin of the anthrax spores used in the mailings.

"The case is unsolved, although the FBI would like you to believe otherwise," she said.

Nass said authorities were "creating a lurid Ivins narrative and repeating it over and over and over," leading most Americans to wrongly believe the case was solved.

Biosecurity industry shields manufacturers from normal business risks

Nass described the biodefense sector as unusually profitable because governments determine product needs and shield manufacturers from liability. She said there are no fixed standards for what products are required or how many doses must be produced.

"Nobody knows what products you need, what vaccines or drugs, what tests ... how many doses ... how many gowns, how many masks or gloves," Nass said.

Manufacturers simply persuade government officials to fund their products, she said. "You get a contract. You can charge almost what you want. You're almost certain to be granted a liability shield."

Nass called for ending liability protections, describing that step as "the most critical thing we can do" to protect the public from what she called "junk drugs and vaccines."

Sources for this article include:

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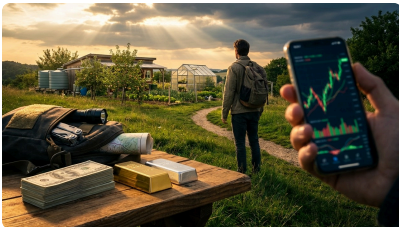
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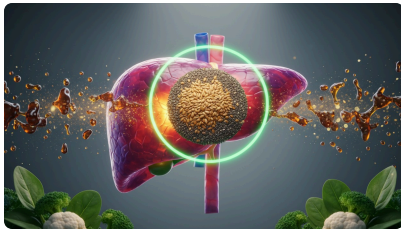
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